

## TESTIMONY OF SMOKEJUMPER FOREMAN DODGE

GUSTAFSON: Mr. Dodge is now know to all of us. There is no need to further introduce him here. He has been on the ground with members of the Board, has discussed in detail the actions incident to this operation, and the Board members are very familiar with all the details as Dodge related them on the ground. However, for the purpose of the record I would like to have Mr. Dodge relate in his own words the actions from the time they arrived over the fire until he arrived at Meriwether. I will dispense with questions since he has repeated this story and lived so closely with it for so long. Following the conclusion of your verbal statement, Wag, the Board may feel that they want to ask you a few more questions. If this is agreeable procedure, the floor is yours.

DODGE: We arrived over the fire, which was about 60 acres in size, at 3:10 p.m. Jack Nash called my attention upon sighting the fire in Mann Gulch. I took position in the door of the plane to observe the terrain and characteristics of the fire. The first tentative jump spot on top of the ridge between Mann gulch and Meriwether Creek northeast of patrol point was to considered suitable because of its position in the path of the fire. Another spot was picked in the bottom of the gulch in the vicinity of the head of Mann Gulch. I was concerned over this choice for reasons that if any injuries occurred, it would be almost impossible to get the injured person out. I related this to the spotter, who was Earl Cooley, but I also okayed the spot as suitable to jump to, which was about one-half mile north of the fire.

The fire at this time gave indications that its rate of spread would considerably reduce throughout the evening and night. It was approximately 3:50 p.m. when I looked at my watch upon landing in the jump area. I had an extremely hard landing, and Rumsey came down the hill and helped me off with my jump gear, and I remained there until the rest of the jumpers were down. Hellman reported to me that all the men were okay that had jumped and we accounted for 13 other jumpers. Merle Stratton did not jump.

Our cargo was dropped to us from approximately 5:00 p.m. when all the cargo was retrieved and camp established below the jump area. At that time, I could hear someone hollering over on the fire across the canyon. I left Hellman with the crew to pick up some subsistence and water before starting down the canyon, and left instructions for him to follow me over to the far side of the canyon with the crew. I contacted Harrison, the prevention guard, up on the head of the fire and brought him back to join our crew,